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SEAGER WHEELER FARM – FINAL REPORT 2003

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Introduction

The year 2003 was a challenging year for the Seager Wheeler Farm.

In April, Larry Janzen, passed away. Larry was the heart and soul of the farm. He had the vision to see what the farm could become. He, and his wife Doreen, worked tirelessly to take the farm to where it is today. He is sorely missed by everyone connected to the farm.

In May our Agri-Arm Manager resigned which left us in a very difficult position. Due to extra effort on the part of our staff and board members we were able to complete most of our projects.

A hail storm in late June did major damage to crops on the farm. One research site was abandoned but most research and demonstration sites were salvageable.

In spite of these set backs, the board is determined to be a well managed, sustainable Agri-Arm site. On October 25th, 2003 a strategic planning session was held to chart the future course for the farm.

Seager Wheeler Farm Orchard

The Seager Wheeler Farm Orchard consists of 3.7 acres. The main crops currently grown are applies, dwarf sour cherries, raspberries, Saskatoons, Sea Buckthorn, Strawberries and blue honeysuckle. A number of demonstrations and research projects are underway:

- A historic walk through time. The visitor will be able to see apple varieties grown in the early part of the century to the present. This will showcase the advancements that have been made in apple breeding in the last 100 years.
- Sour Cherries – These are a new crop which have great potential in this area. The University of Saskatchewan is experimenting with several varieties and mechanical harvesting methods.
- Apple tree truss comparison. Dwarf apple trees generally require support and this demonstration compares 1) no support 2) French axe method, 3) individual posts.
- Raspberries – Alternate mowing vs. conventional thinning.
- Strawberry crown demonstration.
- Saskatoons – Planting depth and pruning demonstrations.
- Black currents, sand cherries, hazelnuts, plums, other fruits and berries will be planted in the future.

Two major orchard improvements received approval this year.

1) Deer Fence – A deer fence was completed this fall
2) Rosthern Town Water Line – The Seager Wheeler Farm has received approval to tie into the Rosthern town water line. This will occur in time to water the orchard in spring of 2004.

These two developments will greatly enhance the farms ability to conduct orchard research and demonstration activities.

Perennial Forage Trials

A group of forage plots were established 6-7 years ago. These plots are purely for demonstration purposes. They have been used every year for tours and field days to demonstrate the pros and cons of forage types. They have been very well received by farmers visiting the farm.

Annual Forage Trials

The Seager Wheeler Farm provides land for the Saskatchewan Forage Council to conduct annual forage trials. All plots were plants and harvested by the Saskatchewan Forage Council. The results will be tabulated and are available from the Saskatchewan Forage Council.

Pea Depth Seeding Trials

A trial looking at pea seeding depth comparisons was started. However, due to problems with seeding equipment we were unable to complete the trial and it was abandoned.

Bean Research & Demonstration

1) University of Saskatchewan Variety and Agronomy Trials:

The Seager Wheeler Farm has been a leader in bean research, demonstration and extension. The farm has provided space for University of Saskatchewan researchers to do agronomic and variety testing. In addition to providing valuable information to plant breeders and agronomics, these plots have proved to be an attraction to producers at various field days and tours.

2) Commercial Bean Production:

The farm has had bean fields since 1999 with various degrees of success. This year started with reasonably good soil moisture. The beans were seeded on May 29th on barley stubble at 90 lbs/acre. The field was treated with Edge prior to seeding. 25 lbs of phosphorous was applied with the seed. 50 lbs of Nitrogen was applied as a top dressing later in July at the time of flowering.

Basagran was applied on July 7th at the recommended rate.

The field was sprayed for grasshoppers. Swathing occurred September 10th and the field was combined September 23rd, 2003.

The gross yield (before cleaning) was approximately 600 lbs/acre.

Fruit Production School

The Seager Wheeler Farm sponsored a Fruit Production School at the Travelodge Hotel in Saskatoon on April 9th, 2003. Sixty people attended. Some of the topics covered.

- Planning and planting an orchard
- Irrigation, fertility and weed management.
- New fruits and variety selection.
- Pest management
- Organic production
- Marketing

Bob Bors, Rick Sawatzky, Clarence Peters and a farmer producer were the speakers.

Pruning School

Thirty-five people attended the pruning school at the Seager Wheeler Farm on April 30th, 2003. Bob Bors, Rick Sawatzky and Clarence Peters lead the classroom discussions and hands on demonstrations. Karen Benjaminson, PFRA also spoke.

The program included:

- Pruning and training for higher yield and quality.
- Shelterbelt enhancement program
- Fruit propagation (cuttings, root stocks, grafting, tissue culture and seedlings)

Seeding Trends 2003 "Looking Back – Looking Forward" In Memory or Larry Janzen

Seeding Trends is the only field day in Saskatchewan featuring the latest in direct seeding technology. In recent years sprayer demonstrations have been a major attraction as well.

This year the day began with a panel consisting of three producers sharing their experiences, concerns and visions for the future. Dr. Adrian Johnson, Potash & Phosphate Institute and Eric Johnson, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) responded to their concerns. Al Foster, Saskatchewan Agriculture, Food and Rural Revitalization, (SAFRR) Tisdale lead a tour of our forage plots.

Rick Sawatzky and Bob Bors, University of Saskatchewan, Horticulture Department and Clarence Peters, SAFRR lead a discussion of prairie fruit production in orchard. Connie Kehler, Saskatchewan Herb and Spice Association gave a talk in the loft of the barn entitled "Potential of Herb and Spice Production in Saskatchewan".

Rich Szwydky, Saskatchewan Soil Conservation Association (SSCA) discussed the "Do's and Don'ts of Direct Seeding Winter Wheat" at demonstration plots he had established.

A post emergent fertilizer demonstration comparing coulter, dribble band and foliar application rounded out the agronomic program.

The main feature was the demonstration of 10 direct seeding implements and 6 sprayer units.

Seeding Trends Field Tour

This field day was a follow-up to Seeding Trends 2003. The day gave farmers a chance to see the demonstration sites at a more mature stage of development.

Thirty people took advantage of the opportunity on July 15th, 2003.

The Agenda included:

- Viewing the direct seeding demonstration plots from Seeding Trends 2003.
- Post emergent fertilizer demonstrations trails.
- Do's and Don'ts of direct seeded winter wheat.
- Intermountain Roundup Ready canola trials.
- PAMI – Liquid swine manure fertilizer trials.
- Annual forage plots
- Preharvest Roundup discussion.

The day concluded with a Barbeque.

Bean & Pulse Crop Field Day

A Bean and Pulse Crop Field Day attracted 38 producers on July 29th, 2003. The day consisted of plot tours to the various variety and agronomic trials taking place on the farm. Unfortunately hail had done major damage on some plots. There was still plenty to see and learn. Of interest were the pea, lentil and bean variety trials. Also the University of Saskatchewan is doing a number of pulse crop agronomy experiments.

Bert Vandenberg, Stan Shirtliffe and Tom Warkentin, Crop Development Centre, University of Saskatchewan who conducted the trials, lead the discussion. The participants also looked at a 10 acre commercial field of beans.

A Barbeque followed.

Orchard Day

An orchard day was held on August 12th, 2003 with 50 people attending.

Much of the time was spent discussing and demonstrating tree grafting techniques. Participants all had the opportunity to try the technique themselves.

Clarence Peters, SAFRR and Rick Sawatzky, University of Saskatchewan, Plant Sciences Department conducted the demonstration.

After a special sour cherry dessert the group toured the orchard to see the summers fruit and berry production. There was a lively question and answer session.

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